

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4070

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 7076

BEIRUT PASS USINT BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, IR

SUBJECT: IRAN EXPELS BBC CORRESPONDENT

1. BBC CORRESPONDENT JOHN BIERMAN CONFIRMED TO EMBASSY OCTOBER 4 THAT GOI HAS ORDERED HIS EXPULSION FROM IRAN NOT LATER THAN OCTOBER 7, DURING WHICH TIME HE IS NOT TO FILE ANY STORIES. BIERMAN, WHO HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A TRIP TO PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN, HAD HAD NO WARNING THAT EXPLUSION WAS COMING AND WAS PROVIDED WITH NO REASON FOR IT. ACCORDING TO UPI AND LE HCE CORRESPONDENTS IN IRAN, HOWEVER, IMMEDIATE REASON FOR BIERMAN'S EXPULSION IS BBC "PANORAMA" SHOW BROADCAST IN LONDON OCTOBER 2, WHICH GOI CONSIDERS UNFRIENDLY TO IRAN AND THE SHAH.

2. ALTHOUGH BIERMAN APPARENTLY HAD NO OVERT HAND IN PRODUCTION OF OFFENDING BBC REPORT ON IRAN, HIS RELATIONS WITH GOI HAVE BEEN UNHAPPY FOR PAST SEVERAL MONTHS DUE TO HIS OUTSPOKENLY ANTI-SHAH VIEWS AND TO CRITICISM, CONTAINED IN HIS REPORTS FROM TEHRAN, OF UNDEMOCRATIC ASPECTS OF PRESENT IRANIAN REGIME. ECONOMIST AND FINAICIAL TIMES CORRESPONDENT DAVID HOUSEGO, WHO HAS HIMSELF OCCASIONALLY BEEN IN HOT WATER WITH IRANIAN AUTHORITIES FOR FILING CRITICAL STORIES, SUSPECTS THAT IRANIANS HAD TAKEN DECISION SOME TIME AGO TO EXPEL BIERMAN AND WRE ONLY AWAITING A
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SUITABLE IMMEDIAT CAUSE FOR DOING SO. PANORAMA BROADCAST

BY BBC PROVIDED THE NECESSARY EXCUSE IN HOUSEGO'S VIEW.

3. COMMENT: THERE ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF RESIDENT WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS IN IRAN AND THESE SEEM OFTEN TO BE ON BAD TERMS WITH THE GOI DUE ESSENTIALLY TO DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TOLE THAT THE INFORMATION MEDIA SHOULD PLAY. SUCH CORRESPONDENTS, HOWEVER, CAN USUALLY REPORT CRITICALLY AND STILL SURVIVE IN IRAN. BIERMAN DID NOT SURVIVE BECAUSE HE BOTH WROTE CRITICALLY OF THIS COUNTRY AND CRITICIZED IT BITTERLY TO ALL WHO WOULD LISTEN. THUS, WHILE THE BBC CORRESPONDENT'S EXPULSION MAY WELL BE INTERPRETED AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE GOI'S INTOLERANCE OF CRITICISM, THE FACT IS THAT BIERMAN,WHO WAS OFTEN CAUTIONED BY HIS FRIENDS TO MUTE HIS ANGRY PERSONAL CRITICISM OF THE IRANIAN REGIME, IS PARTIALLY TO BLAME FOR GETTING THROWN OUT OF IRAN.
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